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ABSTRACT

Use of portfolios for student evaluation has expanded in recent years to assessment of student progress in training to teach English as a Second Language (TESL). At Wright State University (Ohio), portfolio assessment is part of both undergraduate and graduate level ESL teaching programs. As at other institutions, portfolio development is being used as capstone project, but is also designed as a uniform summative assessment measure for all ESL programs (state teaching credential, institutional certificate at undergraduate and graduate levels, undergraduate concentration within the English major, and master of arts degree in ESL instruction) while meeting the specific assessment needs of each. The portfolio consists of: a statement of the candidate's philosophy of teaching (1 page); an introductory essay (3-4 pages) containing a self-analysis of development through the program and a description of the practicum; the practicum evaluation(s); a videotape from the practicum or other approved teaching experience, with a critique (2-3 pages); a project from one of a number of approved methods and materials courses; a teaching question response (5-6 pages); and the candidate's curriculum vitae (optional). Additional materials are program-specific. The portfolio is evaluated by a committee of major-area faculty and faculty from the two English majors. Contains 8 references. (MSE)

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Using Portfolios as a Capstone Assessment in TESL Programs

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Portfolios have grown in popularity as an assessment tool because of their ability to present a wider range of material relevant to the student's performance than can be measured by an exam or research paper. By incorporating multiple measurements of competency, portfolios display a broader and more detailed range of the student's knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. While portfolios are used routinely to assess the proficiency of ESL students (see, for example, Smolen, Newman, Wathen, & Lee 1995; Gottlieb 1995; Hall, Rubin, & MacDonald 1997), their use in ESL teacher preparation programs (Gaies 1992; Johnson 1996; Waldspurger 1997) and in the assessment of teachers (Ekbatani & Pierson 1997; McCloskey & Stack 1997) is less widespread. The purpose of this paper is to describe portfolios used in TESOL preparation programs, focusing on the specific needs of capstone assessment at Wright State University.

Johnson (1996:11) points out that in teacher education programs portfolio assessment:

- examines how teachers make sense of what they are learning;
- values what teachers think, not simply what they do;
- allows for multiple opportunities for teachers to demonstrate their competencies;
- recognizes the true complexities of learning to teach.

Johnson (1996) suggests that teacher educators using portfolio assessment must first determine the purposes of their teacher

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education program and how the requirements of the program address these purposes. She next proposes that the teacher educators establish what evidence is appropriate to assess the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teachers. She divides this evidence into:

1. artifacts--documents produced during course work, such as a paper, case study, or self analysis of a videotaped lesson;

2. reproductions--additional material about typical events in the student's education, such as an audiotape of a discussion with an experienced teacher, journal entries, or an interview with a student;

3. attestations--documents about the work of the novice teacher prepared by someone else, such as a peer's written observations of the novice teacher or a supervisor's classroom observation;

4. productions--documents prepared especially for the portfolio, such as goal statements, reflection statements, and descriptions of the significance of the documents included in the portfolios.

Johnson (1996) concludes by pointing out that portfolios "can create opportunities for novice teachers to use their knowledge about teaching in ways that are similar to how they will use that knowledge once they enter their own classrooms" (Johnson 1996:14). She further notes that portfolio assessment "can help teacher educators assess how novice teachers make sense of what they are learning in terms of themselves, their classroom practices, and the social contexts within which they teach." Johnson (1996) claims that, by employing portfolios, teacher educators will assess process more than product, value pedagogical reasoning more than teaching behaviors, accept multiple perspectives, provide multiple

opportunities for demonstrating competencies, and allow internal reflection.

The advantages of portfolio assessment described by Johnson (1996) are reflected in the portfolios used by TESOL preparation programs. Gaies (1992) describes a portfolio component in the assessment of undergraduate TESOL students at the University of Northern Iowa. This four-part portfolio includes documentation from the declaration of the student's major, through mid-program, up to graduation, and after graduation.

The first part of the portfolio contains:

1. the final high school transcript;
2. the ACT/SAT scores;
3. the registrar's degree audit;
4. the declaration of major form;
5. a letter of interest written by the student addressing:
   a. intended major(s)/minor(s) and reasons for selecting them;
   b. previous preparation and experience relevant to the major;
   c. awards and honors received;
   d. postgraduation career/education goals;
   e. expected relation between major and postgraduation goals;
6. optional additional relevant material.

The remaining parts of the portfolio described by Gaies (1992) monitor the student's progress and accomplishments during, at the completion of, and after completion of the TESOL program. For the mid-program section, the portfolio includes:

1. the registrar's degree audit;
2. papers and examinations the student feels reflect the competencies stipulated under the outcomes for the

particular student's program. These competencies are checked off on the list of outcomes.

The third part, assembled just before graduation, updates the mid-program requirements and adds:

1. written assessments or performance evaluations from any practicum;
2. cooperative experience, or similar activity;
3. GRE, LSAT, or similar scores if available;
4. a list of any awards and honors received.

Finally, one to three years after graduation a completed alumni survey is included.

An example of a TESOL MA portfolio used at American University was described by Waldspurger (1997). This portfolio includes:

1. personal and professional statements which describe the student's personal, professional, and academic development during the program of study, including a philosophy of teaching statement and five-and ten-year plans;
2. academic accomplishments, including two lesson plans, a teaching video, and two academic projects;
3. optional elements such as a curriculum vita, evaluations and recommendations, published papers, and conference presentations.

There is also an oral comprehensive examination based primarily on the portfolio.

At Wright State University, portfolio assessment is a part of both the undergraduate and graduate level TESOL programs. The capstone portfolio at Wright State has much in common with the previously mentioned portfolios. However, unlike these the Wright State portfolio has had to address an additional challenge: To

provide a uniform capstone measurement for all TESOL programs while meeting the specific assessment needs of each program.

Policy for the TESOL programs is set by the Language Programs Committee in the Department of English Language and Literatures, where TESOL is housed. The committee is composed of all members of the TESOL faculty, additional English faculty, and TESOL student representation. The committee set out to develop a portfolio assessment that would allow comparison throughout all the TESOL programs available at Wright State University, which serves a diverse, primarily commuter population. To meet the various needs of this population, the department had developed interlocking programs that offer the state TESOL teaching credential, an institutional certificate at the undergraduate and graduate level, an undergraduate concentration within the English major, and a master's of arts in TESOL.

The state teaching credential can be done independently or as part of several degree programs. At the undergraduate level, these include the TESOL concentration within the English Department or a variety of related undergraduate majors and, at the graduate level, the MATESOL, or the remaining two English master's degrees in composition and rhetoric and in literature, as well as the Master's of Humanities. The institutional certificate can likewise be done within a variety of undergraduate majors and, for graduate students, within the remaining MA programs in the department or in the Master's of Humanities program.

In addition to the TESOL requirements for each TESOL program, there are department, university, and state requirements for the various programs. The state teaching credential is regulated by the Department of Education while the certificate must conform to the Board of Regents requirements for certificates. The undergraduate concentration in TESOL must parallel the other English concentrations, which include professional writing, creative writing, and literature. All concentrations must have similar course requirement distributions and include a capstone course in the specific concentration. For the MATESOL, students must meet the general requirements of the master's degree programs in English, including comparable course requirements and the Master's Portfolio.

The Language Programs Committee addressed the complexities of these multiple requirements by developing a TESOL capstone portfolio that is required of all TESOL students, in conjunction with the additional requirements in the specific programs. The TESOL portfolio consists of:

1. A statement on the candidate's philosophy of teaching (1 page);

2. An introductory essay (3-4 pages) containing:
    a. A self-analysis of the candidate's development through the program, including overall strengths and weaknesses as an EFL/ESL teacher,
    b. A description of the practicum;

3. The practicum evaluation(s);

4. A video tape from the practicum or other approved teaching experience (at least twenty minutes in length), with a critique of the teaching (2-3 pages);

5. A project from TESOL Methods and Materials, Issues in ESL Reading and Writing, ESL in the K-12 Classroom, Issues in ESL Listening and Speaking, or a curriculum/materials project from another approved course;

6. The Teaching Question Response (5-6 pages);

7. The candidate's curriculum vita (optional).

Items 1-4 focus on the student's teaching. Item 1 is relatively self explanatory. Students are asked to bring together their preparation in teaching, including course work, practical experience, and other relevant influences, to produce their own philosophy of teaching. In 2a they must also reflect on their development as a teacher, having previously done so through the practicum journal and regular class discussions required for the practicum.

Items 2b, 3, and 4 directly concern the practicum, a four-hour course or two two-hour courses, providing a teaching experience in ESL and/or EFL. The evaluation form or forms for this experience are included as item 3. The practicum evaluation, which the students sees at the beginning of the practicum, is filled out by the ESL institutional supervisor upon the student's completion of the practicum. This evaluation focuses on the areas of

- content knowledge;
- goals and objectives;
- instructional strategies
- time management;
- communication skills;
- personal characteristics;
- professional characteristics.

The five-page form lists specific characteristics or traits for each category with an evaluation scale from 1, this competency or trait was not present, to 5, this competency or trait was outstanding, as well as NA, not applicable. For each area there is additional space for comments. In item 4 the student self-critiques a video of the practicum, the critiquing skill having been developed both through required observation reports in TESOL Methods and Materials and journal entries in the practicum.

The portfolio also includes curriculum/materials development by requiring a course project and a question response. Item 5, the project, is from TESOL Methods and Materials or other courses requiring a major curriculum and materials project. For item 6, the Teaching Question Response, the student must develop a one-hour curriculum for a specific population. The student must include:

1. general objectives for the course;
2. methodology with accompanying theoretical base for the course;
3. specific objectives for the one hour;
4. linguistic and cultural material for the one hour;
5. types of learning and teaching activities for the one hour;
6. teacher's roles for the one hour;
7. learners' roles for the one hour;
8. role of instructional materials for the one hour;

9. a brief contextualized grammar lesson that addresses a specific problem indicated;

10. a brief evaluation instrument for the hour.

The TESOL student is given the location and type of institution, the purpose of the course; the students' age, gender, proficiency level, and other appropriate background information; and examples of a specific grammatical problem the ESL/EFL students have been having. The candidate can choose between two scenarios for the Teaching Question Response, which have been designed to incorporate the candidate's intended area of specialization, e.g., K-12, EFL higher education, intensive English, etc.

Additional assessment is program specific. The institutional certificate requires students to complete only the TESOL portfolio as their capstone evaluation. In addition to the portfolio, the undergraduate English majors with a concentration in TESOL are required to take TESOL course work beyond the certificate, including a more extensive practicum, which also serves as their capstone course. The TESOL state credential students likewise have additional course requirements beyond the certificate, including ESL in the K-12 Classroom and a non-Western culture elective. They must also successfully pass a state requirement, the ETS Praxis exam in Teaching English as a Second Language, and take a four-hour, specialized K-12 practicum. For the MATESOL, students are required to complete the Master's Portfolio, as must all master's degree candidates in the department. The requirements for the Master's Portfolio are:

1. A cover essay (two to four pages) that introduces the portfolio. This essay explains and justifies the selection of papers offered (item 2a below), the critique (item 2b), the candidate's Program of Study (item 3), and the independent project (item 4).

2. a. (1) One paper from each of four courses taken during the candidate's graduate study, distributed as follows:
   (a) two papers from any courses taken to fulfill the requirements for the degree;
   (b) two papers from 700-level seminars or courses in the program core.
   (2) Candidates who have written a graduate thesis, whether creative or expository, may submit the completed thesis in place of the papers in (1a) above.
   (3) Candidates for the M.A. in TESOL must successfully complete the TESOL portfolio, which will take the place of papers in (1b) above.

   b. A detailed three- to five-page critique of one of the papers indicated in item (1) above, discussing the paper's purpose, strengths, and weaknesses, and explaining what changes the writer would make to improve it. The paper submitted for critique must be in its original form, and include the instructor's comments.

3. An official signed copy of the candidate's Program of Study.

4. An independent paper. This ten- to fifteen-page paper (excluding title page, notes, and bibliography) is an expository work of scholarship, research, criticism, or similar academic study, written on a topic of the candidate's choice and addressed to a general audience of scholars in English. Whatever its subject and approach, the paper should demonstrate both a thorough familiarity with its field (through a literature review or similar survey of resources, and indicated by an appropriate bibliography) and a professional treatment of its topic. This paper should not be a development of a paper already submitted for a class, and the candidate may not use an Independent Study to prepare for it.

As is noted in the description, the TESOL portfolio is incorporated into the larger Master's Portfolio and the requirements are adjusted for this inclusion. Additionally, the

MATESOL candidate must select a topic relevant to the TESOL field. During the quarter previous to submission of the independent paper, the candidate must submit a prospectus and an annotated bibliography, to be approved by a faculty committee from the relevant major. The portfolio is evaluated by a committee of both faculty in the major and faculty from the other two English majors.

The use of a standard portfolio allows the department to verify that basic knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values are met uniformly throughout the program. The portfolio also accommodates the individual student's focus. The additional requirements of the department, university, or state supplement the portfolio. To assure that the TESOL capstone portfolio accurately captures the purposes of the programs at Wright State, the Language Programs Committee, TESOL graduates, and other relevant individuals will periodically revisit the portfolio design in conjunction with reviews of the TESOL programs.

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